

HISTORIC DROUGHT

HISTORIC EVERGLADES LIFELINES

2006-2008

Following two years of unprecedented hurricane activity and above-normal rainfall, South Florida is now facing a severe drought. A water shortage is declared, and mandatory water use restrictions go into effect for towns and farms that use Lake Okeechobee as the primary or backup source of water supply. Lake Okeechobee water levels set record lows. The state's population is estimated at 18.7 million in 2007, an increase of more than 2.7 million since the new millennium. The projected 2009 population for South Florida is 7.7 million.



2006

Long-term water shortage begins. From January through November 2006, only 38 inches of rain falls on South Florida — a deficit of nearly a foot of average rainfall. The Upper Kissimmee River region north of Lake Okeechobee receives only 29 inches of rain — more than 1.5 feet below average. The drought stretches through 2007 to create the driest year for Florida on record since 1938.



2006

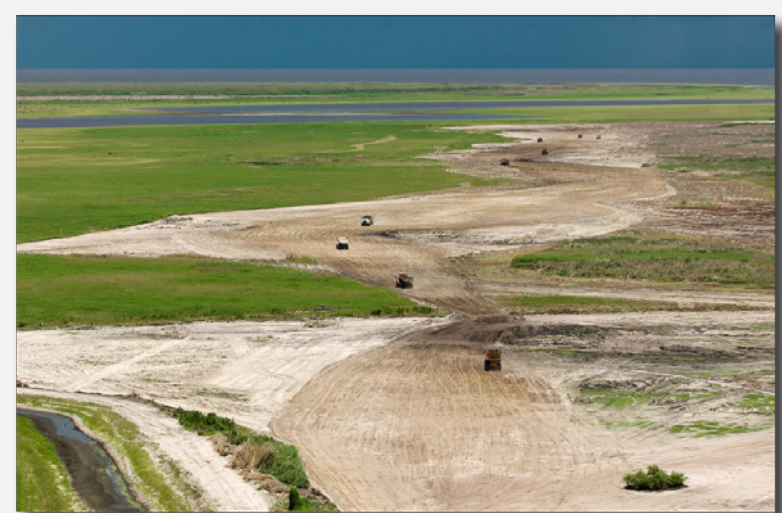
Land acquisition for Kissimmee River Restoration completed.

The South Florida Water Management District Governing Board unanimously approves the purchase of the last parcels of land needed to complete the final phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration Project. The 12,000 acres purchased for \$35.8 million complete the total acquisition of 102,061 acres needed for construction of the project. A year later, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reconnects another four miles of historic river channel.

2007

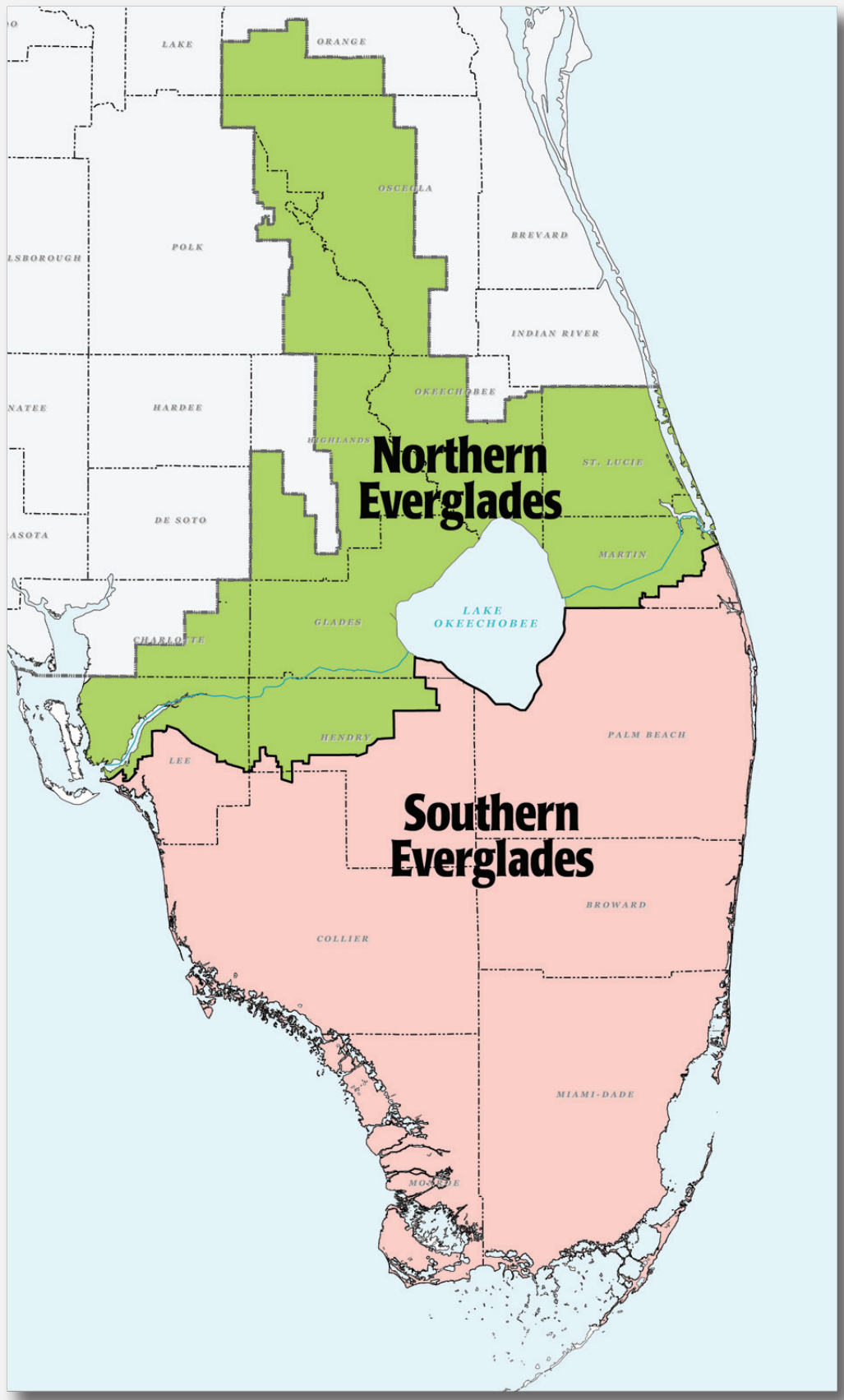
Lake Okeechobee reaches record low.

On July 2, 2007, the lake reaches a record low of 8.82 feet. Despite water supply challenges, the 2006-2007 drought adds unique opportunities for environmental restoration. Low water levels in Lake Okeechobee allow roughly two million cubic yards of muck to be excavated from the lake's shoreline, removing nearly 240 metric tons of in-lake phosphorus.



2007

Florida expands law to improve the health of Lake Okeechobee, coastal estuaries and northern Everglades. The Lake Okeechobee Protection Act is broadened to safeguard and restore the entire northern Everglades system, including the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries.



Legislation is passed to increase protection for Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries, 2007

2007

Another 6,000 acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas completed.

Now totaling 52,000 acres, South Florida's Stormwater Treatment Areas — along with better farming practices — prevent more than 2,600 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades. Since 1994, reduction in phosphorus loads is 70 percent, equating to 572,000 ten-pound bags of fertilizer.

2007

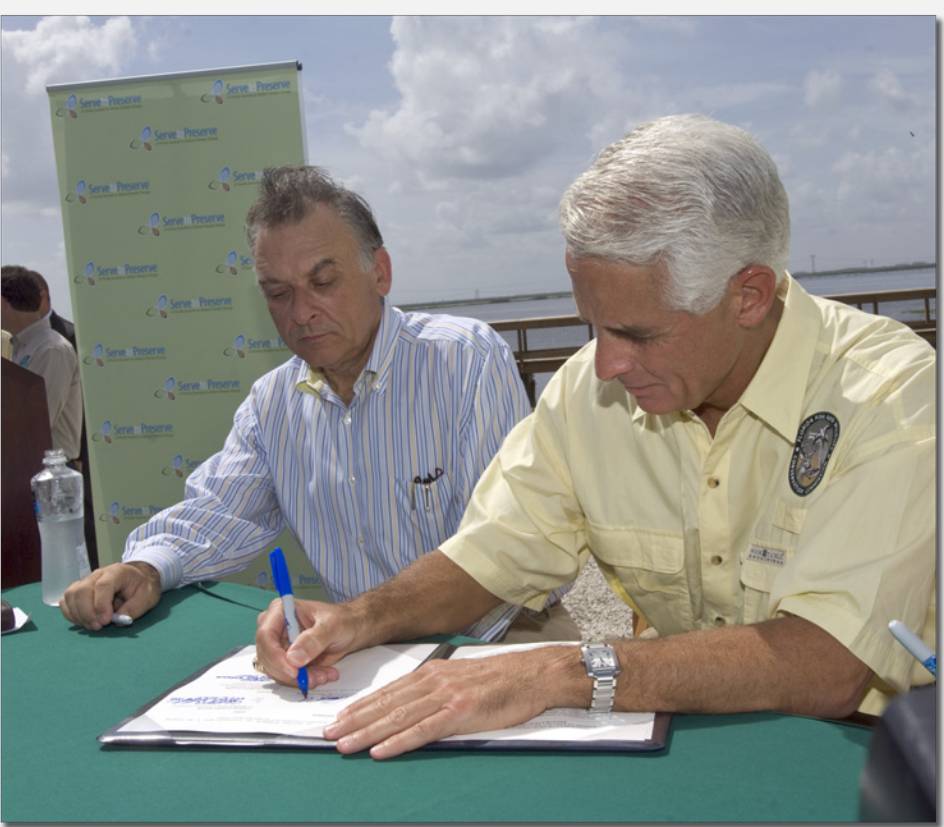
Landmark rule strengthens protection for Everglades.

The South Florida Water Management District approves a groundbreaking Regional Water Availability Rule that prevents urban water users from tapping the Everglades for new or additional water supplies and guarantees water to protect and restore the River of Grass.

2008

State continues acquiring land for Everglades restoration.

Florida acquires close to 60 percent (225,000 acres) of the estimated lands needed to implement the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The State's investment to improve both the quality and flow of water to the Everglades tops \$4 billion.



Governor Charlie Crist (in foreground) with Robert Buker, president and CEO of United States Sugar Corp.

2008

Governor Charlie Crist announces strategy to achieve historic land acquisition.

Governor Crist calls upon the South Florida Water Management District to negotiate an agreement to acquire land owned by United States Sugar Corp. for Everglades restoration.

2008

Tropical Storm Fay drenches South Florida.

During one week in August, the District's 16 counties averaged more than 7.5 inches of rain, with 15 inches falling on some areas. Lake Okeechobee rose more than 2 feet. While Fay's rains provided relief from the 2006–2008 water shortage, the unpredictable nature of South Florida's rainfall extremes emphasizes the importance of the District's newly adopted Comprehensive Water Conservation Program.



Residential flooding from Tropical Storm Fay, 2008